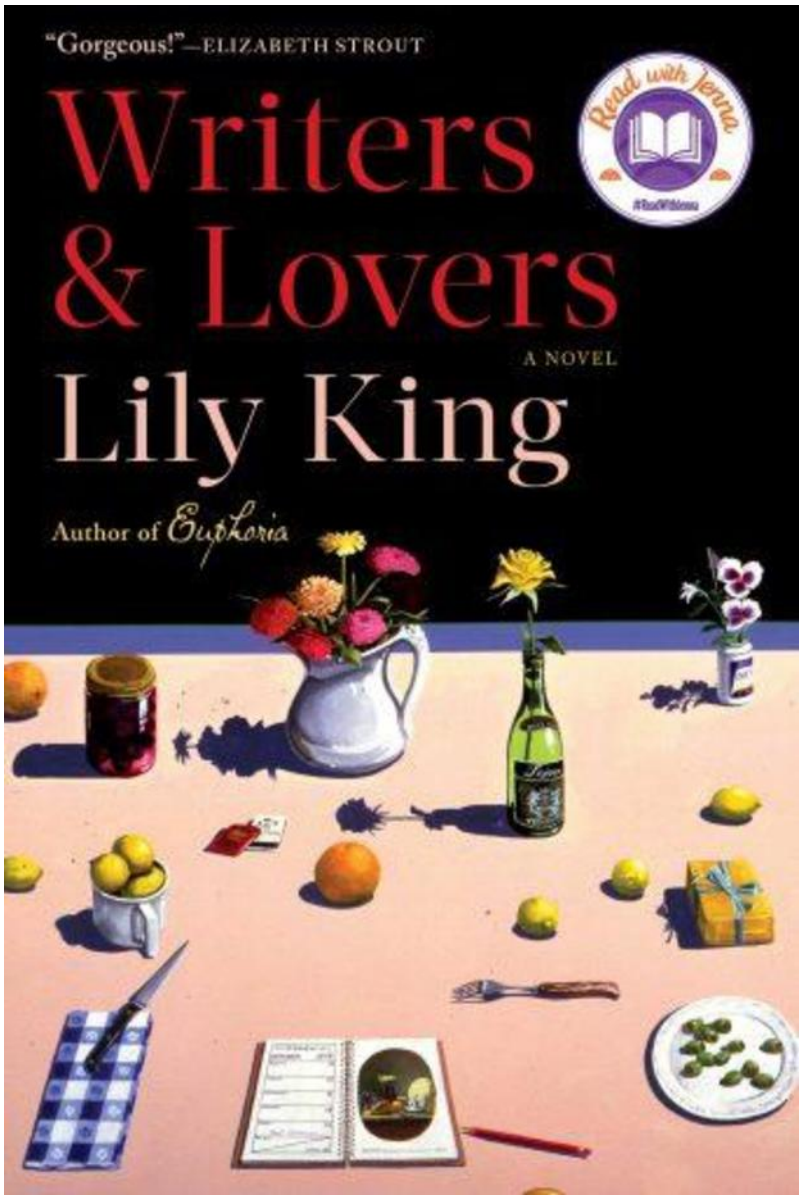
VIRTUAL BOOKENDS CAFÉ AT

THE MANHASSET PUBLIC LIBRARY

FEATURING



VISIT…

BOOK SUMMARY

A novel of art, love, and ambition and an unforgettable portrait of an artist as a young woman—from Lily King, the New York Times *bestselling author of* Euphoria.

Blindsided by her mother's sudden death, and wrecked by a recent love affair, Casey Peabody has arrived in Massachusetts in the summer of 1997 without a plan. Her mail consists of wedding invitations and final notices from debt collectors.

A former child golf prodigy, she now waits tables in Harvard Square and rents a tiny, moldy room at the side of a garage where she works on the novel she's been writing for six years. At thirty-one, Casey is still clutching onto something nearly all her old friends have let go of: the determination to live a creative life.

When she falls for two very different men at the same time, her world fractures even more. Casey's fight to fulfill her creative ambitions and balance the conflicting demands of art and life is challenged in ways that push her to the brink.

Writers & Lovers follows Casey—a smart and achingly vulnerable protagonist—in the last days of a long youth, a time when every element of her life comes to a crisis.

Written with King's trademark humor, heart, and intelligence, *Writers & Lovers* is a transfixing novel that explores the terrifying and exhilarating leap between the end of one phase of life and the beginning of another.

Book Marks

Writers & Lovers

LILY KING

WHAT THE REVIEWERS SAY

RAVE: ELIZABETH EGAN,
THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
Even with a handful of compelling plots in the air, King is at her wisest and most self-assured when she shows how Casey gradually gets her bearings as a motherless daughter: one step forward, two steps back. Losing a parent at any age is the pits, but being the first of your friends to go through it—to be the one writing a eulogy when everyone else is writing wedding vows—is its own fresh hell. *Writers & Lovers* bravely traverses that pain ... After a while, I didn't bother to dog-ear anymore; I just held the book open and let my tears fall on the page. I'm not talking crying-emoji tears; I mean actual sobs, the most cathartic kind ... a story where absence is a constant presence, stitched with humor, determination and hope.

RAVE: RON CHARLES,
THE WASHINGTON POST

... wonderful, witty, heartfelt ... *Writers & Lovers* is a funny novel about grief ... it's dangerously romantic, bold enough and fearless enough to imagine the possibility of unbounded happiness ... This is a bracingly realistic vision of the economic hopelessness that so many young people are trapped in: serving extraordinary wealth but entirely separate from it ... the arc of this story [is] so enchanting. All of these tragedies and obstacles are drawn with stark realism and deep emotional resonance. But even during the early pages, we can sense Casey's spirit crouching in determined resistance ... As in her previous novels, King explores the dimensions of mourning with aching honesty, but in *Writers & Lovers* she's leavened that sorrow with an irreducible sense of humor ... With Casey, King has created an irresistible heroine—equally vulnerable and tenacious—and we're immediately invested in her search for comfort, for love, for success ... The result is an absolute delight, the kind of happiness that sometimes slingshots out of despair with such force you can't help but cheer, amazed.

RAVE: AMY PEDULLA,
THE BOSTON GLOBE

King deftly crafts a young woman aching to reach a personal Nirvana ... Death permeates the book, it looms above every character's outline, and King skillfully colors each of them in a different hue ... In Casey, King has created a woman on the cusp of personal fulfillment and strong enough to stand on her own, someone akin to Sally Rooney's Frances in *Conversations with Friends*—both writers home in meticulously on female personal development mediated by capitalism, art, sexual relationships vs. romance, and friendship ... King's novel is a defense of writing, sure; her character finds her voice in the end and brings her novel to completion, and finally sells it. But King aims for something higher than that. The novel is a meditation on trying itself: to stay alive, to love, to care. That point feels so fresh, so powerfully diametrically opposed to the readily available cynicism we've been feasting on

POSITIVE: JENNIFER KURDYLA,
THE HARVARD REVIEW

Casey tells us her story in a desperate first person that results in the kind of sentences one might scoff at in a book about writers...But in the context of the whole package, Casey's story is anything but scoffable; her point of view, her struggles, and her ambitions come off as delightfully sincere ... I often thought while reading, *maybe I could write like this someday*—in order to mollify the bad things that feel even worse when I don't write—or that I could at least give myself the pleasure of dipping into more books that make me feel like this ... On the surface, there's nothing exactly special about King's fifth novel ... The meta qualities of this novel about writing are what redeem her, as well as the man-boys she alternately desires and repels ... Each time I've read *Writers & Lovers*—first in a world where I felt almost too connected and then one where I physically ached for the people I took for granted—I was reminded of the power stories have in keeping us together. It's writing like King's that makes these days and nights of solitude feel okay.

POSITIVE: KENDAL WEAVER,
ASSOCIATED PRESS

...a down-to-earth saga of an extremely bright and likable single woman wrestling with sexual desires, emotional dreads — and the difficulties of finishing her first novel ... It's easy to pull for Casey. She's wise, funny and clearly lovable ... while built around an agreeable character, is heavier on discourse than on drama — a book about writers seeking out writers and what feeds writers' inner needs ... an engaging portrait of a woman confronting modern hardships.

MIXED: JOHN WILLIAMS,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

King's novel is help of a sort, an unmistakable broadside against fiction's love affair with macho strivers, even — or especially — when layers of lyricism and tenderness coat their machismo ... The emotional force of *Writers & Lovers* is considerable, but it takes some time to land. As sometimes counterintuitively happens in autobiographical fiction, there's a strange unconvincingness that hovers over stretches of this book. One wonders if not having to strenuously imagine this time and these circumstances means that some of the supporting characters and scenery feel more stock than a writer of King's talent intends. She spends a bit too much time early on establishing the scene of the restaurant, with characters who feel like supporting players in a TV show. A reader could be forgiven for feeling a bit unchallenged and uninvested after 50 pages. But sticking with this novel offers

rewards, and by the time Casey is shuttling between her romantic experiences with two very different men, King's straightforward prose and deep feeling have hit their stride ... Things really fall into place for Casey as the novel draws to a close — in a pretty heavy-handed avalanche, actually. But King is too smart to send a character riding off into the sunset. She simply leaves Casey in a very promising place, no more or less precarious than she had been when things were bad and could turn good.

MIXED: TOM ZELMAN,
THE STAR TRIBUNE

It's worth mentioning that the community of writers who people the coffee shops and bookstores of this novel seem a pretty narcissistic bunch. But the conversations that Casey has with them are terrific — King's gift is to suspend the reader, to make the wait for resolution fascinating ... Readers of King's 2014 novel, *Euphoria*, who are hoping for an even more remarkable novel in *Writers & Lovers* may be disappointed. There is nothing comparable to the brilliance of Nell Stone, a Margaret Meade stand-in in the earlier work, and the excitements of *Writers & Lovers* are on a smaller scale, though equally well written.

For more reviews visit- https://bookmarks.reviews/reviews/all/writers-lovers/

PRAISE

A *New York Times* Best Seller!
A #ReadWithJenna Book Club Pick as Featured on *Today*
Belletrist Book Club April Selection by Emma Roberts
A *New York Times Book Review* Group Text Selection
Named a 2020 Book You Should Pre-Order Now by *Marie Claire*
Named a "Book We Can't Wait to Read in 2020" by the *Amazon Book Review*
Named One of The 50 Most Anticipated Books of 2020 by *Entertainment Weekly*
Named One of "32 Best New Books of 2020" by *Vulture*
Named one of *LitHub*'s Most Anticipated Books of 2020
Named one of The Best New Books in "Pick of the Week" by *People*
Named one of 41 Best Books to Read in 2020 by *Vogue*

"A comic and compassionate novel… It shares with [*Euphoria*] a fascination with the difficulty of defining the worth of one's life when the familiar markers of adult achievement are slow to materialize. With wit and what reads like deep insider wisdom, Ms. King captures the chronic low-level panic of taking a leap into the artsy unknown and finding yourself adrift, without land or rescue in sight."—**Maureen Corrigan, *Wall Street Journal***

"Delightful… An unmistakable broadside against fiction's love affair with macho strivers, even — or especially — when layers of lyricism and tenderness coat their machismo. The emotional force of *Writers & Lovers* is considerable."—***New York Times Book Review***

"Romance isn't the point for Casey. Love is the gravy; words are the filet. Finding a way to build a life around work she loves, finding a way to support herself as a writer — this is the line connecting all three corners of the love triangle at the heart of this novel."—***New York Times Book Review,* Group Text Book Club**

"Writers & Lovers made me happy. Even as the narrator grieves the loss of her mother and struggles to make art and keep a roof over her head, the novel is suffused with hopefulness and kindness. Lily King writes with a great generosity of spirit."—**Ann Patchett**

"*Writers & Lovers* is exactly the book we need now. Witty and heartfelt… I could not stop reading."—**Judy Blume**

"Fantastic."—**Emma Roberts**

"This smooth, deliberate chronicle of creation keeps the men in their place and Casey firmly rooted at the center of her own story. Instead of casting her as a woman torn between archetypes of male creativity, *Writers & Lovers* portrays her as a woman in thrall to her own generative processes, a devotee to the art of (her own) attention."—***Los Angeles Times***

"Among the elements that make *Writers & Lovers* so winning are the perfectly calibrated little details, convincing conversations, and droll wit… *Writers & Lovers* is a book about passion, desire, grief, determination, and finding one's way. It's also about craving love, family, and success… generously infused with heart and soul and wit and wisdom."—**NPR**

"*Writers & Lovers* is a funny novel about grief, and, worse, it's dangerously romantic, bold enough and fearless enough to imagine the possibility of unbounded happiness."—***Washington Post***

"King captures the agita of an early-life crisis and the eccentricities of a writer's life, spiking the narrative with wit, sumptuous imagery and hilarious skewerings of literary elitism."—***People***

"King has created a woman on the cusp of personal fulfillment and strong enough to stand on her own, someone akin to Sally Rooney's Frances in *Conversations with Friends*… But King also situates Casey inside a variation of the which-lover-will-she-choose framework of, say, Nancy Meyers's film *Something's Gotta Give*… The novel is a meditation on *trying* itself: to stay alive, to love, to care. That point feels so fresh, so powerfully diametrically opposed to the readily available cynicism we've been feasting on… King wants us to keep trying, through whatever means necessary, to beat the odds."—***Boston Globe***

"A poignant and heartfelt novel about the effects of grief and the paths people take to get through life. I couldn't put the book down…"—***Seattle Times***

"A down-to-earth saga of an extremely bright and likable single woman wrestling with sexual desires, emotional dreads… An engaging portrait of a woman confronting modern hardships."—**Associated Press**

"King has portrayed effectively and compassionately with well-crafted prose, evocative descriptions, and spot-on dialogue."—***New York Journal of Books***

“Funny and romantic and hard to put down, full of well-observed details of restaurant culture and writer’s workshops. It’s hard to imagine a reader who wouldn’t root for Casey.”—***Library Journal*** **(starred review)**

“A knowing look at the pursuit of a life in the arts, with a protagonist you’ll root for.”—***Marie Claire***

“King is one of those rare writers who can entwine sadness, hilarity and burning fury in the briefest of moments.”—***BookPage***

“An extraordinary novel… King beautifully documents every aspect of Casey’s character. Casey’s insights into the world of writing are fascinating and often humorous… The prose [is] linguistically sophisticated, but clean and uncluttered.”—***Midwest Book Review***

“This novel will become a defining classic for struggling young writers.”—***Vulture***

“A breath of fresh air, with characters that leap off the page.”—***Amazon Book Review***

“King’s gift is to suspend the reader, to make the wait for resolution fascinating.”—***Minneapolis Star Tribune***

“Masterful… You can’t put it down, and you’ll feel larger and more connected once you finish it. Plus, it’s funny as hell.”—***Dead Darlings***

“King leaves no barrier between readers and smart, genuine, cynical, and funny Casey. A closely observed tale of finding oneself, and one’s voice, while working through grief.”—***Booklist*** **(starred)**

“[A] charmingly written coming of age story.”—***Kirkus Reviews*** **(starred)**

“Intimate and vulnerable… Lily King’s novel follows a deeply relatable protagonist navigating a whole menu of crises surrounded by a cast of genuine, vivid characters… The book occupies a small space, but packs it to the brim with humanity.”—***Entertainment Weekly***

“Elegant, droll… This meditation on the passing of youth is touching and ruefully funny.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“Lily King is one of our great literary treasures and *Writers & Lovers* is suffused with her brilliance. It is captivating, potent, incisive, and wise, a moving story of grief, and recovering from grief, and of a young woman finding her courage for life.”—**Madeline Miller, author of *Circe***

“*Writers & Lovers* is a portrait of the artist as a young woman. Lily King writes masterfully about desire and loss, creativity and inspiration, and how each

overlaps and influences the other. I found myself reading slowly, underlining phrases, wanting to linger in the world of this novel. Her insights about love—how it is elusive and ineffable—and about grief—how it is something that you live inside—took my breath away."**—Christina Baker Kline, author of *A Piece of the World***

"My favourite of Lily King's books so far. Exuberant and affirming, it's funny and immensely clever, emotionally rare and strong. I feel bereft now I've finished."**—Tessa Hadley, author of *Late In The Day***

"*Writers & Lovers* stole my heart from its first pages. I am in love with this book. In. Love. This deep dive of a novel will stay with me forever."—**Elin Hilderbrand, author of *Summer of '69***

"Gorgeous!"—**Elizabeth Strout, author of *Olive Kitteridge***

"If you loved *The Friend* but wish it had had more sex and waitressing, get ready for Lily King's *Writers & Lovers*. Delicious."—**Emma Straub**

"Seemingly light and breezy, the novel has an impressively steely core… *Writers & Lovers* has one of the most completely satisfying endings around, both surprising and solidly in character."—***Columbus Dispatch***

"Remarkably funny… Full of moments of keen observation, of wry remarks about the challenges of writing and the awkwardness of early love." —***BookReporter***

"*Writers & Lovers* is totally immersive, an invitation into the interior world of a grieving, struggling young writer. I consumed it in just a few sittings, putting it down only when I had no choice, and picking it back up as soon as I could, hungry for Casey's divulgences and full of hope for her future. I am grateful to Lily King for writing a character whose naked vulnerability made me feel like a trusted friend: one who could—or had to—just listen and be present for her. In doing so, I have gained empathy. That, to me, is the sign of the best fiction."—**Becky Dayton, The Vermont Book Shop (Middlebury, VT)**

"It's often hard to read about someone being stuck in the worst kinds of emotions for three hundred pages, but Lily King made it easy in this one!"—**Ellie Ray, Content Book Store (Northfield, MN)**

"Told with such wit and vulnerability, I think this is a brilliant novel that will appeal to so many different readers."—**Jamie Southern, Bookmarks (Winston-Salem, NC)**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Set in Boston in 1997, *Writers & Lovers* is a transitional moment in a young woman's life who suffers from anxiety and has trust and abandonment issues. Talk about Casey's character, her personality, her ambitions, and her thoughts on marriage: "It was nothing I ever aspired to" (p. 72). Is she relatable? How or how not? Then discuss how your perspective of the protagonist changed over the course of the novel.

2. Geese are prominently featured in the novel and are known to be very loyal birds that mate for life and protect their young. Talk about how the geese are used as symbols in the story. Why do you think Casey chooses the geese to honor her mother's memory? Did you also think her tribute was "weird"?

3. How do the city of Boston and the restaurant, Iris, function as characters? In what ways are the worker's lives influenced by their place of employment? Casey comes to consider members of the staff such as Harry, Mary Hand, and Victor Silva as part of her extended family. Observe how they, in turn, affect Casey and their importance to the story.

4. Casey's mother and father have given her plenty of reasons to mistrust them. Compare Casey's relationship with her mother with that of her father. To which parent is she closest and why? If she hadn't discovered her father's voyeurism (p. 278) do you think she would have forgiven her mother and moved in with her? Explain your answers.

5. On several occasions during the novel Casey suffers extreme anxiety attacks. Persistent thoughts of her mother's death, her father's betrayal, crushing debt, and recent medical scares, leave Casey feeling like her "whole body is a bell" (p. 287). Speak about the ways her anxiety hinders her life and how she copes.

6. Throughout the novel, Muriel is often the calming voice of reason and the most stable relationship in Casey's life. Talk about their

friendship and how the author avoids the trope of toxic female friendships.

7. We're introduced to Luke early in the story, but the repercussions of that failed relationship linger. Consider Luke's role and how his actions affected Casey's relationships with Oscar and, especially, Silas?

8. Take a closer look at how King uses Casey's novel, *Love and the Revolution*, to explore the grieving process. Think of a time in your life when writing helped you to overcome a difficult period and share what you learned from that experience.

9. When Casey decides to commit to just dating Oscar, she says, "I'm done with the seesaw, the hot and cold, the guys who don't know or can't tell you what they want" (p. 199). How does your opinion of Oscar change after they start dating? Compare Casey's relationship with Oscar to that of her relationship with Silas; what draws the couples together and what tears them apart? Do you agree with her choice of partner at the end of the novel? How would your decision have differed from that of Casey's?

10. A major theme of the book is Casey's past and current lovers and how those relationships impacted her. On page 239, Paco, her ex from Barcelona, says to her, "You hate men" (p. 239). Do you agree with him? Examine if King successfully addressed this one way or the other. Give examples to support your views.

11. On page 223, Casey says, "My father had this kind of drama in him, sudden surges of despair about life and wasted chances and breaks he never got. I figured that an actually successful man like Oscar would have outgrown all that crap." What should we make of this comparison to her father and what does it say about Oscar's character? Do you think she was being fair? Why or why not?

12. Casey remembers, "It's Star of Ashtabula who reminds me of my mother" (p. 241). Why do you think Silas and his story come to mean so much to her?

13. We discover later in the novel that Casey isn't her real name her

father started calling her that after his favorite poem, "Casey at the Bat." On page 213, she tells Oscar, "That's me. Named for a guy who struck out when it mattered most." What does this say about her self-esteem and how she views herself? Why do you think Casey shared this part of herself with Oscar when she kept so many other things a secret?

14. Take the discussion a step further and consider why, after years of estrangement from her father, she still chooses to identify by that name? Reflect on the significance of the author revealing Casey's real name, Camila, in the very next chapter when she is contacted by an agent hoping to represent her. What might King be trying to say about identity?

15. The theme of having a room of one's own, the privacy to write to her fullest potential is always on Casey's mind. In what ways does she compensate for not having an ideal place to write? How did learning about Casey's writing process impact your reading and connection to the character? What do you think inspires Casey to write?

AUTHOR INFO

Author Bio

- Birth—1963
- Where—State of Massachusetts, USA
- Education—B.A., University of North Carolina; M.A., Syracuse University
- Awards—Whiting Writers' Award; Raymond Carver Prize; New England Book Award; 2 Maine Fiction Awards
- Currently—lives in Portland, Maine

Lily King is the author of several well-regarded novels, which have achieved numerous "best novel" and "editor choice" citations, as well as literary prizes and nominations.

King grew up in Massachusetts and received her B.A. in English Literature from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her M.A. in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. After grad school she took a job as a high school English teacher in Valencia, Spain and began writing her first novel. Eight years, ten more moves all over the US, and many bookstore, restaurant and teaching jobs later, that novel was published as *The Pleasing Hour* in 1999.

The Pleasing Hour won the Barnes and Noble Discover Award, a Whiting Writer's Award, was a New York Times Notable Book and

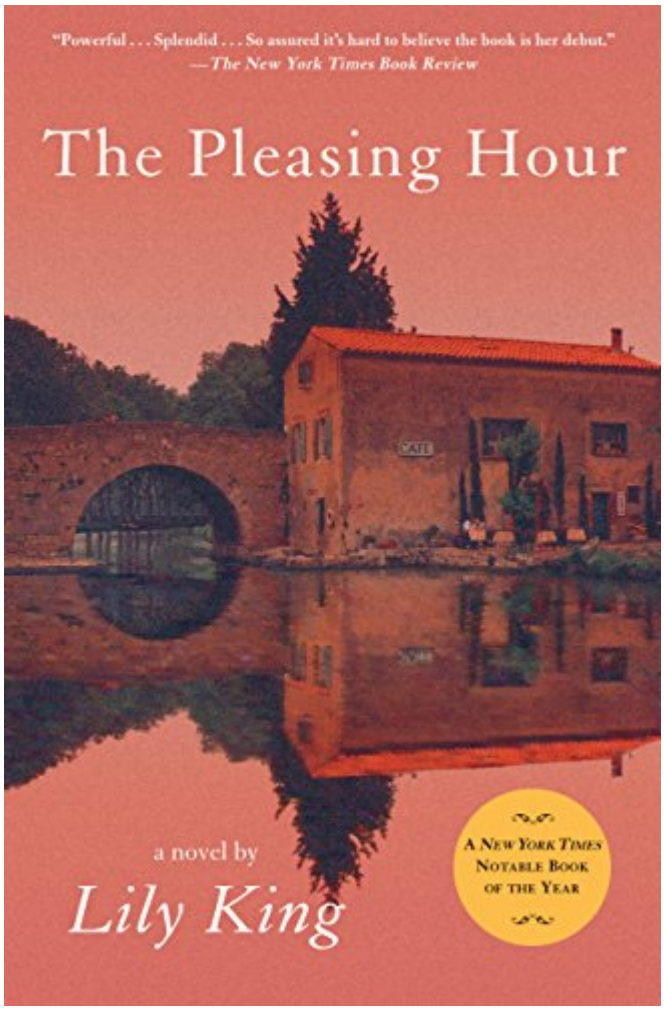
an alternate for the PEN/Hemingway Award. It was followed by *The English Teacher* (2005) and was a Publishers Weekly Top Ten Book of the Year, a Chicago Tribune Best Book of the Year, and the winner of the Maine Fiction Award. Her third novel, *Father of the Rain* (2010), was a New York Times Editors Choice, a Publishers Weekly Best Novel of the Year and winner of both the New England Book Award for Fiction and the Maine Fiction Award. Her fourth novel, *Euphoria* (2014), won the Kirkus Award for Fiction 2014, the New England Book Award for Fiction 2014 and was a finalist in the National Book Critics Circle Awards. *Euphoria* was named one of the 10 Best Books of 2014 by The New York Times Book Review. It was included in TIME's Top 10 Fiction Books of 2014 and the Amazon Best Books of 2014. Reviewed on the cover of The New York Times Book Review, Emily Eakin called *Euphoria*, "a taut, witty, fiercely intelligent tale of competing egos and desires in a landscape of exotic menace." It has been optioned by the BBC as a limited series.

Her most recent novel, *Writers & Lovers*, was released March 3, 2020. The title was chosen for the following book clubs: #ReadWithJenna Book Club as featured on Today, the Emma Roberts Belletrist Book Club and the New York Times Book Review's Group Text Selection.

Lily's first short story was published in Glimmer Train in 1991. Other stories, essays, and reviews have since appeared in a variety of publications, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Vogue, The Los Angeles Review of Books, One Story, The Harvard Review, Ploughshares, and several anthologies. Her novels have been published in 20 languages and translated into 19 languages. The author is the recipient of a MacDowell Fellowship and a Whiting Writer's Award.

In 1995 she met a guy named Tyler at her friend Bernardine's house in Belmont, Mass. They married in 1998. They have two daughters and two dogs and live in Portland, Maine.

OTHER BOOKS


"Powerful . . . Splendid . . . So assured it's hard to believe the book is her debut."
—The New York Times Book Review
The Pleasing Hour
a novel by
Lily King
A New York Times Notable Book of the Year

The Pleasing Hour (1999)

A New York Times Notable Book

Winner of the 1999 Barnes & Noble Discover Award

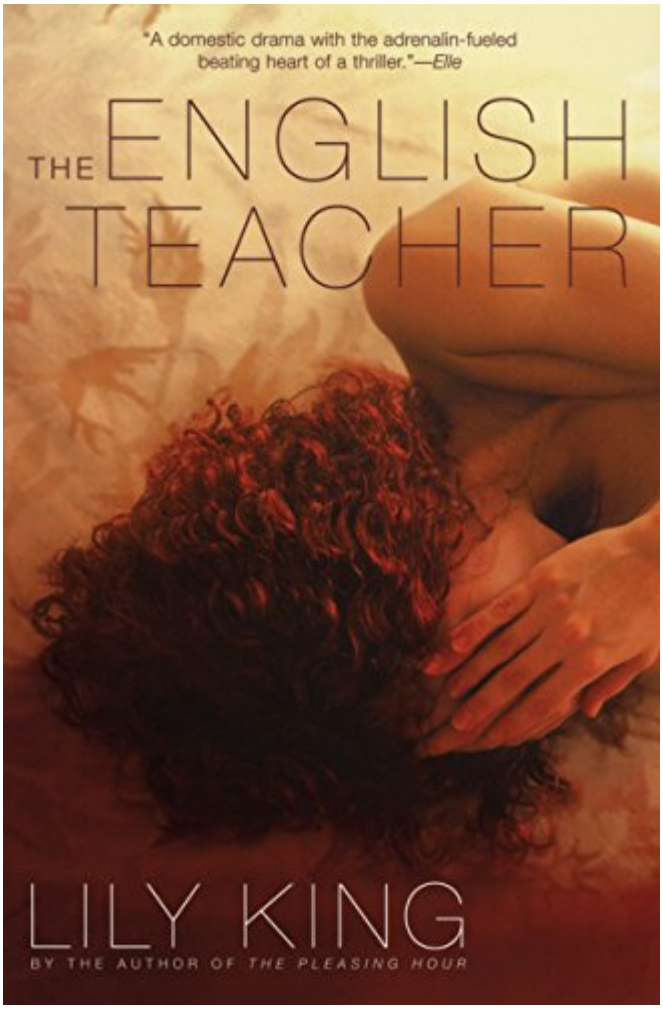
An alternate for the PEN/Hemingway Award

Fleeing a devastating personal loss, a young American woman heads to Paris to work as an au pair and finds both trouble and salvation within the Tivot family.

Every autumn, on a day called la rentree, hundreds of filles descend upon Paris to move in with Parisian families and care for the children. They drink in the glamorous culture, pursue romance and the perfect accent. But Rosie is different; when she comes to live with the Tivots on their houseboat in Paris, she is fleeing an unspeakable loss that has left her hollow and longing for family.

As Rosie awkwardly grasps for the French words to communicate with the Tivots, she longs for a piece of common ground with Nicole, the cool, distant, and beautifully polished mother of the three children she cares for. Rosie's bond with Marc, the father of the household, develops almost too naturally, and the children make their way so deep inside her heart, she can practically read their thoughts. But when Lola, the middle child, begins to suspect too close an attachment between her au pair and her father, Rosie is alerted to her trespass within the family and moves to the south of France to care for Nicole's elderly guardian, the storyteller of the family's secrets.

Soon Rosie understands the tragic losses behind Nicole's austere demeanor and sees that the two of them have more in common than she believed.


"A domestic drama with the adrenalin-fueled beating heart of a thriller."—Elle
THE ENGLISH TEACHER
LILY KING
BY THE AUTHOR OF THE PLEASING HOUR

The English Teacher (2005)

A Chicago Tribune Best Book of the Year

Publishers Weekly Best Novel, Top Ten Book of the Year

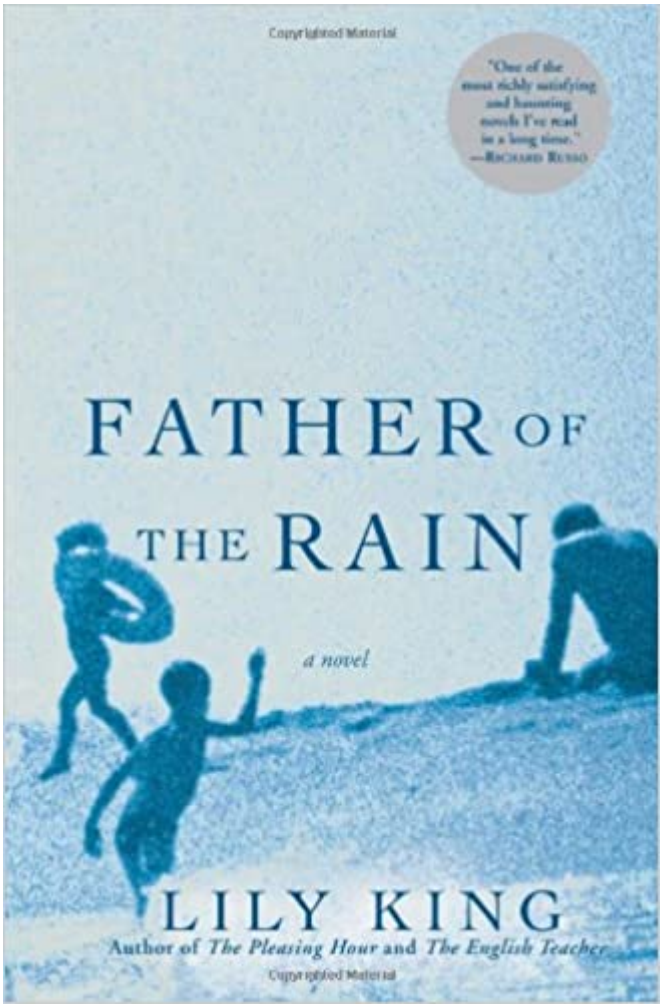
Winner of the Maine Fiction Award

An alternate for the PEN/Hemingway Award

A single mother has sheltered her son for many years at the private school where she works as an English teacher, but she is beginning to unravel as secrets from her past catch up with her. Fifteen years ago Vida Avery arrived from Texas alone and pregnant at Fayer Academy. She has since become a fixture and one of the best English teachers Fayer has ever had. By living on campus, on an island off the New England coast, Vida has cocooned herself and her son, Peter, from the outside world and from an inside secret. For years she has lived in solitude and largely through the books she teaches, but when she accepts the impulsive marriage proposal of ardent widower Tom Belou, the prescribed life Vida had constructed is swiftly dismantled.

Peter, however, welcomes the changes. Excited to move off campus, eager to have siblings at last, Peter anticipates a regular life with a "normal" family. But the Belou children are still grieving, and the memory of their recently deceased mother exerts a powerful hold on the house. As Vida begins teaching her signature book, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, a nineteenth-century tale of an ostracized woman and social injustice, its themes begin to echo eerily in her own life and Peter sees that the mother he perceived as indomitable is collapsing and it is up to him to help.

The English Teacher is a passionate tale of a mother and son's vital bond and a provocative look at our notions of intimacy, honesty, loyalty, family, and the real meaning of home.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"One of the most richly satisfying and haunting novels I've read in a long time."
—Richard Russo
FATHER OF THE RAIN
a novel
LILY KING
Author of The Pleasing Hour and The English Teacher
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The English Teacher (2010)

A New York Times Editors Choice

Publishers Weekly Best Novel of the Year

Winner of the 2010 New England Book Award for Fiction

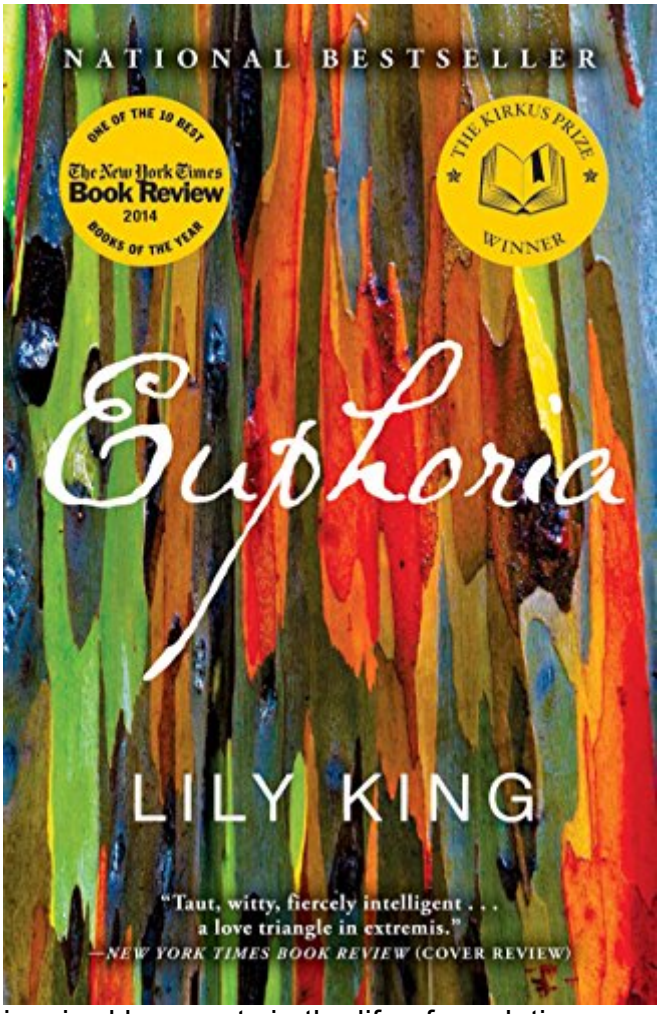
Winner of the Maine Fiction Award

Lily King's masterful new novel spans three decades of a volatile relationship between a charismatic, alcoholic father and the daughter who loves him.

Gardiner Amory is a New England WASP who's beginning to feel the cracks in his empire. Nixon is being impeached, his wife is leaving him, and his worldview is rapidly becoming outdated. His daughter, Daley, has spent the first eleven years of her life negotiating her parents' conflicting worlds: the liberal, socially committed realm of her mother and the conservative, decadent, liquor-soaked life of her father. But when they divorce, and Gardiner's basest impulses are unleashed, the chasm quickly widens and Daley is stretched thinly across it.

As she reaches adulthood, Daley rejects the narrow world that nourished her father's fears and prejudices, and embarks on her own separate life—until he hits rock bottom. Lured home by the dream of getting her father sober, Daley risks everything she's found beyond him, including her new love, Jonathan, in an attempt to repair a trust broken years ago.

A provocative story of one woman's lifelong loyalty to her father, *Father of the Rain* is a spellbinding journey into the emotional complexities and magnetic pull of family.



Euphoria (2014)

New York Times Bestseller

Winner of the 2014 Kirkus Prize

Winner of the 2014 New England Book Award for Fiction

A Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award

A Best Book of the Year for:

***New York Times Book Review*, *Time*, NPR, *Washington Post*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Newsday*, *Vogue*, *New York Magazine*, *Seattle Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *The Guardian*, *Kirkus Reviews*, Amazon, *Publishers Weekly*, Our Man in Boston, Oprah.com, Salon**

Set between two World Wars and inspired by events in the life of revolutionary anthropologist Margaret Mead, *Euphoria* is an enthralling story of passion, possession, exploration, and sacrifice.

English anthropologist Andrew Bankson has been alone in the field for several years, studying a tribe on the Sepik River in the Territory of New Guinea with little success. Increasingly frustrated and isolated by his research, Bankson is on the verge of suicide when he encounters the famous and controversial Nell Stone and her wry, mercurial Australian husband Fen. Bankson is enthralled by the magnetic couple whose eager attentions pull him back from the brink of despair. Nell and Fen have their own reasons for befriending Bankson. Emotionally and physically raw from studying the bloodthirsty Mumbanyo tribe, the couple is hungry for a new discovery. But when Bankson leads them to the artistic, female-dominated Tam, he ignites an intellectual and emotional firestorm between the three of them that burns out of anyone's control.

The New York Times
PRIVATE LIVES Personal essays on the news of the world and the news of our lives.

Would Marriage Ruin Our Happiness?

BY LILY KING / OCTOBER 1, 2014 7:16 PM October 1, 2014 7:16 pm 202

We wrote our vows the day before our wedding, sitting on a rock. I was pregnant, and beside me, shuddering in the wind, was my little plastic grocery bag of Ritz crackers, cereal bars and ginger ale. The bag went everywhere with me, even to the jewelry store where Tyler and I bought the rings, and if I ate and sipped at a steady pace I could keep the vomiting down to about four times a day.

We didn't know what we were doing, and we were terrified. Our parents were all divorced. My father had remarried and divorced again. His mother had done the same. We had aunts and uncles, cousins, siblings and stepsiblings who were divorced. Even my grandparents, back in the '30s, had split up.

In the pictures in our wedding album, we look like we're at a funeral, our faces so pale and stunned. And our parents, stepparents, and ex-stepparents are in various degrees of discomfort, too. My father had agreed to come to my wedding only if my mother promised not to speak to him. My mother, who does not like being told what to do, would not promise this, but I told my father she had.

Before I married, a therapist said to me, "You seem to think that right now is the most you will ever love each other, like you only get one tank of gas for the long trip of marriage. You've never considered the possibility that love will grow."

Love will grow? It sounded like a fairytale with magic seeds. My only hope about marriage was that the love would die really, really slowly, so slowly I might not notice.

Marriage was not something to which I'd ever aspired. My parents were married for 21 years, yet there was no wedding album I ever saw, no framed pictures of them together, eating cake or dancing. By the time I came along, they were living separate lives in the same house. I have only one memory of them in the same room together, one Christmas night when I'd asked them to pose in front of the tree for a photo I took with

my new camera. It was a Polaroid, and I kept it on my bureau until I was 10, when my mother told me she was going to leave my father, and asked if I would come with her. We would leave in a week, after my birthday and the Fourth of July fair, to stay for the summer with my grandfather and his wife. We would have to keep it a secret from my father. I said yes, just as I would have said yes to my father, had he come to me that afternoon instead. We took the TV from the kitchen, and left a note on the dinner table for him to see when he came home from work.

A few months after Tyler and I moved in together, I took a job as a high school English teacher, replacing a woman on maternity leave. One morning in April, as I was packing up my books, Tyler began pacing our apartment in his parka. He was about to catch a plane to Cleveland for his great-aunt's funeral.

He stood at the window for a long time, then swung back around and asked, maybe too loudly, "Let me ask you a question."

I thought he was going to ask me to take him to the airport, which was irritating because I'd miss the morning assembly.

"Do you want to get married?"

"What?" I said, stalling. This was how he was going to do it? At 7:13 on a Monday morning?

Then there was a box, and a ring.

He was waiting for an answer. "Maybe," I said.

Why did he want to ruin our happiness with marriage?

Up until then all our decisions had been haphazard. My moving in with him had been the result of an argument about grocery shopping. Neither of us planned ahead. Our bedroom had clothes for carpet. Our cars were moving landfills. Who was this man who'd gone to a store and chosen a ring, who'd paced and paced and then blurted it all out? It was my first intimation that he was braver and more grown-up than I was.

We sat on the couch and he told me we could define marriage in any way we wanted. We could make our own rules.

The ring was too big, so I put it on a chain around my neck and went to school. He took a cab to the airport. We told our families and our friends. I used the word fiancé sardonically. But we could not set a date. We had enacted the first part of the ritual — the question, the ring, the answer — but we could not commit to the second half, the permanent-commitment, lifelong part.

At the end of June, I was told I had extensive endometriosis, a condition that had prevented several women I knew from conceiving children. Tyler and I cried together on a patch of grass outside the clinic. I said I was so sorry. Tyler said we would adopt.

Three weeks later I was pregnant. We looked at the stick and its two lines. Our sudden, mutual, complete elation surprised us. We took photos of ourselves holding the stick. We screamed and giggled and hugged and hugged. We went swimming and played Marco Polo. Then we called all our parents and fixed a date for the day of our marriage.

My mother kept the promise she refused to make and did not speak to my father at our wedding. They both kicked it up on the dance floor, my father wearing a party hat and my mother linking arms with my mother-in-law and Tyler's stepsisters and can-can-ing around the periphery. They were watching each other, though. Afterward, my father kept mentioning my mother's "hideous" suit. And my mother was "shocked" by his white hair.

Tyler and I got a puppy, bought a house, had the baby, then another less than two years later. I had moments of fear that I would fail, that I didn't know how to be a wife or a mother, that I didn't know how a real family worked.

I quit the novel I was working on about an old Irish spinster and began writing about a woman who gets married impulsively and is terrified. I made her problems gigantic, her barriers to intimacy extreme, and her failures flamboyant. While my character made a mess of her marriage, mine began to take root.

Before all this, when I was in my early 30s, for a little while, I dated two men.

One was tall and sexy. He wore a leather jacket and drove a car that smelled like dirty socks. He was hard to read, but he kept asking me out and I was madly attracted to him. The other was adorable and chatty. He liked to kiss and talk at the same time, to narrate his feelings for me.

I was waiting tables at a fancy restaurant at the time, and occasionally it would be closed for a private party. Once, at one of these parties, there was a fortuneteller who sat in a corner, available to the guests. When she slipped out for a cigarette, I followed her. I told her I was dating two men and felt confused. For a long time she didn't answer, then she said, "Tell me their names."

I told her.

"Tyler really loves you," she said.

I thought maybe she'd gotten the names scrambled. Tyler was the sexy, silent one. The one who had never mentioned love or anything close to it.

But when he asked me a few weeks later to decide between him and the other guy, I saw on his face how much that decision meant to him.

The fortuneteller was right.

And our love grew and grew, as if from a magic seed.

https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/01/would-marriage-ruin-our-happiness/

The New York Times

BY THE BOOK Published Feb. 27, 2020Updated March 4, 2020

For Lily King, a Great Book Always Starts With the Sentences

What books are on your nightstand?

“Spring,” by Ali Smith, “Friday Black,” by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, “These Truths,” by Jill Lepore, “On Tyranny,” by Timothy Snyder, “Crooked Hallelujah,” by Kelli Jo Ford, “Shakespeare’s Kitchen,” by Lore Segal, “A Burning,” by Megha Majumdar, “Man’s Search for Meaning,” by Viktor Frankl, “Mai Sentita Così Bene,” by Rossana Campo, “Book of the Little Axe,” by Lauren Francis-Sharma, “Braised Pork,” by An Yu, “Epitaph of a Small Winner,” by Machado de Assis, and “The Education of an Idealist,” by Samantha Power, to name a few.

What’s the last great book you read?

“Becoming,” by Michelle Obama.

Can a great book be badly written? What other criteria can overcome bad prose?

No, not a great one. Not if it's truly *bad* prose. Nothing can compensate. The entire experience comes through the sentences. You can't make a good spaghetti sauce with rotten tomatoes.

Describe your ideal reading experience (when, where, what, how).

Morning. Cup of tea. Beside a fire or under a tree or (best of all) on a train in a foreign country. With a book that jolts my imagination in some way so that I am flipping to the back and scribbling ideas on the end pages.

What's your favorite book no one else has heard of?

I love this question. "The Evening of the Holiday," by Shirley Hazzard. It has been a bible of mine since I discovered it while working in a used-book store in California in the '90s. That bookstore was the best education I ever got.

What book should everybody read before the age of 21?

"Beloved," by Toni Morrison. But that should just be the first time, not the last.

What book should nobody read until the age of 40?

I would never want to censor any work of literature, but I am a big believer in rereading, especially the books you thought you hated in your 20s. Those are full of revelations.

What do you read when you're working on a book? And what kind of reading do you avoid while writing?

I become the literary version of a picky eater when I am writing the second half (the fraught half, when all the doubt and misery creep in) of a book. Very little tastes good because I'm looking for something so particular that will help me push through. I have no idea what will do the trick so I'm constantly tossing away books after 20 pages like a petulant child. When I'm over that phase, I'll collect all the discarded books and start over without being quite so needy and demanding.

Has a book ever brought you closer to another person, or come between you?

All the time. Nearly every day. But what came to mind first was a moment when I was 24 and my college boyfriend and I were trying to make a long-distance relationship work. He came to visit me for a week in the summer and he brought "Love in the Time of Cholera" to read. He loved it so much and he'd read me passages from it that were beautiful and moved us, but they did not keep things from going badly that week. He left early, left that book behind for me, knowing that I'd love it, that we would love it together, but couldn't love each other in the way we once had. And I did love that book, with all my heart.

What's the most interesting thing you learned from a book recently?

I recently read "The Revisioners," by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton and there's this scene when a slave named Domingo has an opportunity to try to escape and he is reluctant because he does not want to leave his father, who is also his owner. It seemed a

particular and excruciating conflict of the heart that I'd never seen explored before. It's a really fine book.

Which subjects do you wish more authors would write about?

I don't care about subjects. Anything becomes enthralling in the right hands.

What moves you most in a work of literature?

I'm most moved by small unexpected moments of human connection: the glove at the end of "The Evening of the Holiday"; the soap in "Love in the Time of Cholera"; the kiss by the urn between Sally Seton and Clarissa Dalloway. Those moments send a charge forward and backward through the novel.

Do you prefer books that reach you emotionally, or intellectually?

Both are a kind of thrill, but when they are done together, when a mind you are awed by brings you to an emotional place, this is the height of the literary experience for me. Colm Toibin and Tessa Hadley's work come to mind.

How do you organize your books?

Because I've worked in bookstores, I arrange them alphabetically by author in sections: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, anthologies, travel, and so on. In the bedroom it's a different story — piles of them by my bed and all along the wall.

What book might people be surprised to find on your shelves?

Many books on women in the military, more on the Beatles.

What kind of reader were you as a child? Which childhood books and authors stick with you most?

My older sister taught me to read early, so I don't remember a time when I wasn't reading. The picture books I recall are "Goodnight Moon" and "The Little Engine That Could" and "The Lonely Doll." If I pick up one of those books now they are a portal to the rug on the floor of my bedroom where I read them over and over. Back then my chapter books were mostly fantasy, "The Chronicles of Narnia" and "A Wrinkle in Time" and "James and the Giant Peach." So when my mother came home with a freshly published hardcover of "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" when I was 7, it was my first encounter with realism, with regular human families and dialogue for pages, and that's when I got the idea that I didn't just want to read books, I wanted to write them.

How have your reading tastes changed over time?

I used to love a long, sprawling sentence full of imagery and detours to more imagery, and now I respond more to concision and precision and spare, efficient, stripped-down prose.

What's the last book you recommended to a member of your family?

"Dept. of Speculation," by Jenny Offill, to my husband; "Never Let Me Go," by Kazuo Ishiguro, and "My Name Is Lucy Barton," by Elizabeth Strout, to one daughter; and

“Housekeeping,” by Marilynne Robinson, and “Her First American,” by Lore Segal, to the other.

Disappointing, overrated, just not good: What book did you feel as if you were supposed to like, and didn’t? Do you remember the last book you put down without finishing?

“Vanity Fair,” by William Makepeace Thackeray. But I didn’t get very far. Should I try again?

You’re organizing a literary dinner party. Which three writers, dead or alive, do you invite?

Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, and Toni Morrison. I would listen behind a curtain, weeping and taking notes.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/27/books/review/lily-king-by-the-book-interview.html

LITERARY HUB

THE CRAFT OF WRITING:

Lily King
on writing the novel she needed 30 years ago.

March 3, 2020

In high school I was fed a full diet of male writers, from Homer to Shakespeare to Wordsworth to Faulkner and Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Plus — because it was New England — a few heavy servings of Cheever and Updike. Not one novel by a woman in four years, only two short stories: “The Grave” by Katherine Anne Porter and “Why I Live at the P.O.” by Eudora Welty. That’s it. And still, I had my heart set on being a writer. It was much the same in college in Chapel Hill, except Southern: Robert Penn Warren, Barry Hannah, more Faulkner.

And still.

After I graduated, I sought out narratives about becoming a writer. I read Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast*, Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Hamsun’s *Hunger*, McInerney’s *Bright Lights Big City*. I read these books over and over, these stories of men in their youth struggling to write. But where were the books about women writers? Where were the books about their struggles?

I was always broke. I was always in debt. I worked restaurant jobs and bookstore jobs and had no health insurance. I started a novel and moved with it every year or two, from New York to Spain to California to New Hampshire.

In my early thirties, I washed up at my older sister’s door in Massachusetts. She took me in and gave me the only space available in the small carriage house that she rented with her boyfriend, a 6-by-10 storage room next to the front door. I squeezed in a desk and wrote in the morning and waited tables at night. I failed at love again and again. Most of my friends had become practical, had careers and salaries and sturdy relationships. They sent me wedding invitations and, a few years later, birth announcements.

Their lives were as incomprehensible to me as mine was to them. In the books I read, those men who want to be writers are seen as tenacious and uncompromising — heroic, even when they fail.

But more and more I just felt pitied.

Read more on the aspirations of a young writer:

Who has the right to be a writer? //
Judy Blume's advice for young writers //
Rebecca Solnit's ten tips for how to be a writer. //
Essential writing advice from Virginia Woolf. //
Louisa May Alcott's letter of advice to a young writer. //

The first scene in my new novel, *Writers & Lovers*, is based on something that happened during that time. My one duty while living in that storage room with my sister and her boyfriend was to walk their dog while they were at work. One morning our neighbor, who owned the big house and the carriage house we lived in, was out in the driveway when I was coming back with the dog. I'd been writing since before dawn, and was still in my sweats and hadn't brushed my hair and was wearing these old slippers with the stuffing coming out.

He asked if it was true that I was writing a novel.
I told him it was. "Well," he said, "I think it's extraordinary that you think you have something to say."

I went back to my storage room and felt like I'd been clubbed in the stomach. I wrote down his words in my journal, and went back to my novel.

I turned 33, then 34. My sister and her boyfriend bought a house and I moved into it with them. They began the process of adopting a child and I was part of the home visit, the maiden aunt, the "writer" in the attic. I'd sent out my novel to nearly 20 agents and the rejection letters were pouring in.

I was having panic attacks by then, and had stopped sleeping. I finally got some cheap health insurance and took a course they paid for on stress

management. I went religiously to that class each week, and did my homework in the workbook they gave us. In the spaces between questions I wrote in small blue script about my physical discomfort: the burning in my chest, the stampeding of my heart, the heaviness of my arms and legs. *What is the source of your biggest frustration?* "There is so much I want yet the steps are so tiny," I wrote. One of the assignments, *Learning Exercise 18: Reducing Suffering*, involved a chart with three boxes. The first box was labeled *My Areas of Suffering* and inside it I had to describe the difference between *What you want* and *What you have*. I wrote that I wanted to be an accomplished writer but that I was an aspiring writer. The next box was *Ways to Reduce Suffering* and below it a list of options: *Forgiveness, Acceptance, Gratitude, Wisdom*. I circled *Acceptance*. In the final box, *My Specific Actions* I wrote, "To be an accomplished writer is a process. It will probably take my entire life. I simply have to keep writing.

When my mother died suddenly, four years ago, I was working on a novel about a writer in 1901, traveling with his mother. I had done months of research for this book and liked the pages I had so far, but after my mother died I stopped writing fiction. I feared that desire would never come back, and when it did, nearly a year later, I could not return to the story of the young man and his mother in 1901. I could not even open the notebook with the first chapters in it. There was only one thing I wanted to write: the novel I needed to read in my twenties and thirties, a story of a young woman struggling to become a writer.

5 books for the aspiring writer.

RECOMMENDED BY LILY KING

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Elizabeth Strout, *My Name Is Lucy Barton*

Tayari Jones, *An American Marriage*

Jenny Offill, *Dept. of Speculation*

Jhumpa Lahiri, *Unaccustomed Earth*

Tessa Hadley, *Sunstroke*

I've been wondering lately why, when I was grieving my mother, this was the story that came rushing out. I think it's because that time in my life felt like a time of mourning, too. I felt the same loss of control, the same acute vulnerability to life itself. I can see now that when I was 34 and filling out that stress workbook, I had begun to grieve my own dream. I wrote this new novel for her, and for all the women in driveways in old slippers, and anyone hanging onto a dream they fear is fading away.

http://lithub.com/lily-king-craft-newsletter

An Interview with Lily King, on Writing WRITERS & LOVERS

Janet Rich Edwards, GrubStreet Novel Incubator alum, recently interviewed Lily King about her latest book, Writers & Lovers (Grove Press, 2020).

When I got my hands on an Advance Reader Copy of Lily King's new novel, *Writers & Lovers* (Grove Press, 2020), I paused – about a nanosecond – before opening it. Our Novel Incubator class had lovingly dissected King's last novel, *Euphoria*, in our effort to learn the craft of long-form fiction. I've returned time and again to King's novels to see how she makes us care about her characters. My expectations were so high, I was almost afraid to crack open *Writers & Lovers*.

I needn't have feared. King's fifth novel is a masterful story of Casey Peabody, a young woman in crisis: she's lost her mother, her student loans are defaulting, and she suffers a love-hate relationship with the novel she's been writing for six years. *Writers & Lovers* immerses you in the particulars of Casey's life as it explores themes of risk, love, and loss. You can't put it down, and you'll feel larger and more connected once you finish it. Plus, it's funny as hell. As BookPage wrote, "King is one of those rare writers who can entwine sadness, hilarity and burning fury in the briefest of moments." It's no surprise that *Writers & Lovers* is on so many 'Most Anticipated Books' lists (*Entertainment Weekly, Vulture, Lit Hub,* to name a few). It was a real privilege to talk with this *New York Times* award-winning, bestselling author about her new novel, due out today.

JANET RICH EDWARDS: The voice of Casey grabs you from the first sentence: "I have a pact with myself not to think about money in the morning." She's wry, she's smart, and she's vulnerable. I'd follow her anywhere. Did Casey's voice just appear in your head, fully formed?

LILY KING: I love that. That's what I was aiming for. I felt like, with every one of my books, the voice of the novel is established in the first paragraph. I'm very much a writer who has to have the first paragraph first. It sets the tone. Once I have the first sentences, I'm off and running. It was like a drumbeat. I just felt it and I knew her. I suppose I did refine her voice -- and of course my editor says, 'Would Casey do this? Would Casey do that?' The word *consistent* is very tricky. People aren't consistent. I'm not aiming for consistency throughout a novel, because people have weird little jets and flares of unexpectedness that's unlike them, but is still them.

I imagine you at your desk, facing the first blank page for *Writers & Lovers*, needing to banish the voices of Bankson and Nell before you can hear Casey. I'm curious about your transition between stories.

It's a long process I basically finished *Euphoria* in 2013 and I didn't start writing this book until late 2016. I had tried two other novels before that. I'd done tons of research, and bagged both of them, and felt this one coming on. That often happens to me. It's a real readjustment going from one book to another, and I don't do it quickly or fluidly. You miss your characters and writing about them so much, and it's ironic because you hated them at first. They were so hard to get into and you were just missing the one from before and you have to start again, and its just a terrible ache, really. It's like starting a new relationship, and you just want to be in the old comfy relationship.

Most novels contain at least a wisp of memoir. But *Writers & Lovers*, with all its intimate detail – about Harvard Square, about waiting tables, about writing, about grief – feels so true, it almost reads as memoir. You must have worked at Upstairs at the Pudding. How much is autobiographical?

It definitely drew on so many emotions I had at the time. I did live in Brookline in a tiny little room, and I worked at Upstairs at the Pudding and I rode my bike across the bridge. I had the same confusion, panic, terrible fear, self doubt, self loathing, wondering where the hell my life was going, because I'd closed so many doors and I didn't know how I was ever, ever going to support myself or have a stable relationship or children. It just all felt like everyone had become older and I was just stuck in the same place. I really tried to capture all of that. I think that's the reason it's so intimate.

I'd been writing things that were non-intimate, completely apart from me. I loved inventing *Euphoria*, going on tour and not having to talk about myself. So, this is the last thing I wanted to write. But my mother died. It made me so raw and vulnerable, and I couldn't write anything for a really long time. When I started again, this book just poured out of me. Because I was in an equally vulnerable state, that early time in my life came to the surface really quickly. I do think you have these times in life that reverberate with each other, when you get older - you're circling around, and it's very powerful. That really propelled something out of me. I look back so fondly at that poor doubting young woman, and I have so much care for her. I really wanted to write about that, but I felt I couldn't capture it, not before the feelings that surfaced with my mother's death.

***Writers & Lovers* is at once a coming-of-age story, a romantic adventure, a tribute to the creative life, and threaded through it all – from the first paragraph to the last - is Casey's grief at losing her mother. Was there an initial theme that formed the backbone of the story, or did you always know you wanted the whole catastrophe?**

It's a really good question. Because that first paragraph, it's all there. I remember at one point I wrote notes on all the narrative arcs, and I was surprised how many there are. There's the financial trajectory she's on. That's in the first paragraph. The love relationships, the grieving, the writing, the anxiety. If I had told myself, oh, you'll have six or seven narrative arcs, I would take to my bed. But fortunately, you're ignorant when you start out.

You managed to make us feel Casey's grief for her mother, without showing us many – if any – scenes of them together.

I hate backstory. In fact, I think there was no backstory when I handed this in. My editor wanted more. I was quite resistant.

Why do you hate backstory?

Oh, I hate to read it. Backstory to me is very rarely written as well as the rest. I really wanted to stay in the present and the thing that was important is that Casey aches for her mother. It doesn't really matter who her mother was. It just didn't feel important to all the other arcs, even the arc of grief. I was grieving my own mother and I was very reluctant to make her a character. I felt very protective of my own memories of my mother that I treasure. I didn't want to put that in.

You didn't want to write another mother either.

Exactly. That's probably why.

There's a way in which not having much backstory makes it more universal.

Yeah. Although I do think in general, the universal is in the particulars.

Casey's struggles with her writing are familiar to most of us. So, it feels like a gift from Lily King when Casey stands up and says her novel is "The place where I am most myself. Maybe some of you … have found this place already. Maybe some of you will find it years from now. My hope is that some of you will find it for the first time today by writing." Were you writing for your younger self, or for us strivers?

Totally. Both, really. I had my younger self in mind. Anytime I do a workshop, the biggest obstacle is the self doubt, the *should I even be considering this?* That was a big impulse for this book, to try to explain to people that this doubt is so real and so pervasive, and you have to ignore it, you just have to push through it.

And you're not alone.

You need a Muriel.

Last question: Why the ampersand?

I love them.

Lily King is the author of five award-winning novels. Her 2014 novel *Euphoria* won the Kirkus Award, The New England Book Award, The Maine Fiction Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Award. *Euphoria* was named one of the 10 Best Books of 2014 by *The New York Times Book Review.* It was included in *TIME's* Top 10 Fiction Books of 2014, as well as on Amazon, NPR, Entertainment Weekly, Publishers Weekly, and Salon's Best Books of 2014. King lives in Portland, Maine, with her husband, two daughters, and two dogs.

Janet Rich Edwards is a graduate of the 2016 Novel Incubator course at Grub Street. Her first novel, *The Weight of Clay,* is currently on submission. When she's not sneaking hours to write fiction, Janet is trying her hardest to write fact, as an epidemiologist at Harvard Medical School. She lives with her husband and never more than two cats in Brookline, Massachusetts.

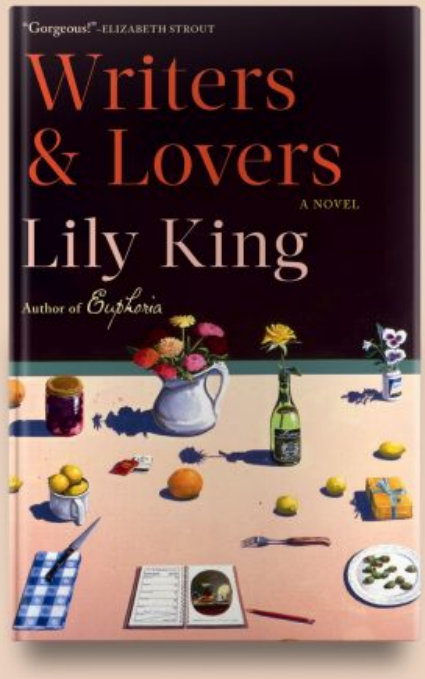
https://grubstreet.org/blog/an-interview-with-lily-king-on-writing-writers-lovers/

BOMB

Kinds of Desire: Lily King interviewed by Francesca Giacco

On the individuality of grief, demystifying the creative process, and the right time to tell a story.

Mar 23, 2020



Sometimes, a book finds you precisely when you need it. Such was the case for me and Lily King's first novel, *The Pleasing Hour* (Grove Atlantic), a lush portrait of a young woman living abroad, conflicted by ambition and desire. It's the kind of story that impresses me more each time I read it—deceptively simple, told with a light, masterful touch. I devour King's impeccably constructed narrative, her fluid, delicate sentences. She has an eye for women who are seeking—the particular ache of yearning for something more. I turn to her writing whenever I need a master class in subtlety, a reminder of how to set a scene or let a detail linger.

King's new novel, ***Writers & Lovers*** (Grove Atlantic), is imbued with her hallmark elegance and sensuality. Casey, our heroine, is struggling to finish the novel she's been writing for six years while waiting tables, drowning in debt, and reeling from her mother's sudden, inexplicable death. This loss colors everything, and King writes about grief incisively, not shying away from the pain and clarity it can give.

Casey's story unfolds on the edge of creative fulfillment, financial independence, and love. Success and connection seem possible, while also fragile and elusive. In exploring the creative process, King depicts a writer's difficulties and doubts alongside precious moments of inspiration, and turns them universal. King and I spoke by phone, pausing between questions and answers to muse on writing's highs and lows. —Francesca Giacco

Francesca Giacco I've seen this book described as the kind of novel you sought as a young woman, as you were coming of age as a writer**.** Did you feel like you were writing to your younger self? How did that affect your process?

Lily King I felt like my younger self and I were writing it together, that I was channeling her emotionally. Most of what happens in the book is fictional, but I definitely needed all the experience and emotions of my younger self to write it. Sometimes you're able to tap into certain parts of your life and other times you can't. I've wanted to write this book for a long time, but this was the right moment, triggered in some ways, I think, by my mother's death. I was more open to it and able to access it because it was a very painful time.

FG As if, with that pain, everything could come to the surface.

LK Exactly. In the process of writing, things rise from your imagination and experience. Those details and memories intertwine and become stronger, to the point that you can't ignore them anymore.

FG It reminds me of something Hemingway said in an interview, that the best writing is done when we're in love. Do you think that could extend to other strong emotions, like grief?

LK After my mother's death, I couldn't write anything for four months. When I was able to write again it had to be something very different than what I was working on before. I can't explain it otherwise. I think the grief must have forced me open in some way.

FG One of the elements of your book I found particularly beautiful was the specificity of Casey's grief, the way an old folk song or group of geese remind her so viscerally of her mother. Everyone grieves differently, of course, but I'm wondering how your own experience influenced the writing of those moments. And how you chose to convey Casey's grief in this way.

LK There's that William Carlos Williams quote: "No ideas but in things." And I do think you have to ground everything in things, in the world. That's how we navigate through something so painful. In writing those moments, I didn't even have to think about it. Those geese were just there. Not from any kind of conscious decision, but out of knowing that grief changes us and how we see ourselves in the world.

FG As Casey is grieving for her mother, two men come into her life, each deeply affected by loss—Oscar is a widower and Silas is mourning the death of his sister. Do you think that shared experience simplifies or complicates relationships?

LK The way I thought about it was, when you're going through something like that, you absolutely need and gravitate towards people who have survived something similar. You can hardly even be around people who have no idea what you're feeling, and it's incredibly comforting to be around those who do. I leaned hard on those people, the ones who truly understood, after my mother died. Casey doesn't know it, and never acknowledges it, but those losses attract her. She's interested in them and all their specificities, like getting to know Oscar's kids, who have lost their mother, and fostering a connection with them. I don't think it complicates things. I think it's much more a source of comfort and connection.

FG As an established writer, Oscar enters the novel playing the part of the great literary man with all the success and recognition Casey dreams of. Though we ultimately see what's behind that façade. What did you find interesting about him crossing paths with her?

LK Oscar's character evolved. I was most fascinated by the kind of guy who comes on really strong and is really charming. A man who falls hard, is so invested, and seems to love completely, until you realize it's all about him. That's what I was really trying to get at—Casey is looking for something solid at a time when there's nothing in her life that she can really lean on. She's desperately seeking what he appears to be, but ultimately it's a mirage.

FG Oscar's two sons are a draw for Casey, too. She's longing for family, especially because her own has failed her in so many ways.

LK In the wake of her mother dying, Casey is really delving into the child part of herself: needy, abandoned. In some ways, she really connects with his kids, on their level. Playing card games, making grilled cheese sandwiches, telling stories. That's all really attractive to her—trying to make the leap into adulthood while still holding on to this experience of childhood. This bond with the children makes it hard for her to then see Oscar as a viable partner. It's too far, too fast. She's straddling those two worlds, adult and child, between him and his sons.

FG The way you write about both money and health struck me. How lucky and tenuous it can be to have both, and how their absence looms so large for Casey.

LK It was so much my experience, I couldn't write it any other way. For most people, writing is an incredible financial sacrifice, and I really needed to convey that. I remember that stress and sacrifice so vividly. Especially once I was in my thirties—I had so much shame about still being a waitress, not moving on, not letting go of this dream. It's funny to see the novel described as a coming of age story, given that Casey is thirty-one, but I do think part of being an adult is taking responsibility of your own health.

I don't in any way plan these things out ahead of time, this idea of a health scare contributing to her growth as a character, but I do think about this a lot. There's something about women that age who seem young and invincible. And it's quite natural to feel that way when you have that kind of youth, but at the same time it's an illusion. And writing is so mental—your body has to be well taken care of. There's such a desire to be in our heads all the time, but the body demands attention, always.

FG In this novel, as well as in *Euphoria* and *The Pleasing Hour*, you've written a woman who's hungry for experience while also having a strong instinct for who she is. What is it about that dynamic that's been so fruitful?

LK They're all women who want so much more than they've got. And I do think they're always navigating a man's world, in one way or another. There's this desire to have things that perhaps women are not supposed to have. They're constantly fighting against that, but not always acknowledging or even conscious of the struggle.

FG To me, desire plays a huge part. How fraught it can be to navigate.

LK Especially different kinds of desire, because it's not always the desire for men. The desires that are strongest in these women can be seen as very unattractive in a patriarchy.

FG There's a rule, often repeated in workshops and graduate writing programs: to never write about writers or writing. How did you decide that Casey would be a writer?

LK I knew it from the very start. It was part of the initial idea for this novel, not even a decision. And I never really got the memo that you shouldn't write about writing, though I was never really attracted to the idea or even thought about it in relation to my work. But funnily enough, even before I started writing this novel, I wrote several short stories in which the main character becomes a writer. The thought just seemed to want to come out, perhaps because writing has been part of my identity now for the majority of my life. It feels more natural now than it used to.

FG You write about a creative experience that's difficult to capture: moments of magic and inspiration, those rare instances in writing when everything just works. How do you convey that, especially for a reader who's not a writer?

LK Writing is obviously an interesting process to me, but it's not a very interesting one to read about. I felt that it was a huge challenge to describe, and what appears in the novel is only a sketch of something multifaceted and complex. I tried to describe a few things that happen to me the most, like the realization that your mind is working on a scene or solving a problem when you're focused on something completely separate. I find that exhilarating … and you can't bring it on. It just happens. I sought out what was most familiar, like the feeling of being close to finished with a draft, coupled with the fear that it's falling apart. I really have to talk myself through those moments. I compare it to painting, the way Casey does in the novel. Painters don't go from left to right on a canvas. These layers are really important, as is the faith you have to have in the process.

https://bombmagazine.org/articles/lily-king/

The Writer

Lily King interview: How I Write

Published May 6, 2020

Award-winning and bestselling author Lily King's latest book, *Writers & Lovers*, is set in the Boston area during the 1990s. This cleverly written novel features a compelling protagonist, a struggling 31-year-old writer named Casey. Readers follow Casey as she navigates a tumultuous time in her life, dealing with intense grief, creative struggles, and a love triangle. King's beautiful writing creates emotional resonance, making *Writers & Lovers* an impactful and interesting read.

Writing about the '90s

I didn't even think about it. It just came out that way, and it felt so natural. I needed to have those answering machines in there. I think for a lot of writers, we're still taking time getting used to very modern technology. For tension, it's wonderful to have those delays and gaps in communication – so it was useful having it take place more than 20 years in the past. It also felt natural to the feel of what Casey was going through.

Starting a new novel

I very much see how it develops. I usually start with a situation that involves some sort of tension or some uncomfortable situation my character is in. I'm not exactly sure how the character will get out of it or what challenges there will be. I often set out on a path, and then at some point, I have to backtrack and go a different way. I take a lot of notes beforehand, and I have an idea, but then I look back and see what feels right – and where I should go from there.

Dialogue

I love reading dialogue but not writing it. I love a lot of dialogue in books because I love humans communicating. Like everything about writing, I don't like to think too much about it. I don't get cerebral about it – I just try to listen and hear what they would say. I write it down, and if it doesn't feel right, I correct it a few days later. Later, I might change it back. It's an active listening process that comes from years of hearing people talk. Sometimes there's a certain character you didn't think would have a voice, but they wind up having a strong voice that you can't ignore.

Revision

I write by hand, so some of that is built-in. Sometimes I write half a notebook by hand and can't go any further. I'll have to type it into the computer at that point, which is my first step in revision. But I mostly keep going in the notebook until I can't go any more. I have to push through, so I don't go back or tinker. Then I try to get a full draft on the computer before I print it out and revise the whole thing, over and over.

Writing routine

I think routine is 99.9% of it. I have to write in the morning, and I have to eat before I write – usually eggs. I always have a cup or two of black tea. After kids, now I eat and read a little of the paper, and then I take my tea and work for as many hours as I can. I count my pages and write it in the back of the notebook to keep track. A good day is over two pages and a great day is four and a half or more.

—Allison Futterman is a freelance writer based in Charlotte, North Carolina.

https://www.writermag.com/writing-inspiration/author-interviews/lily-king/

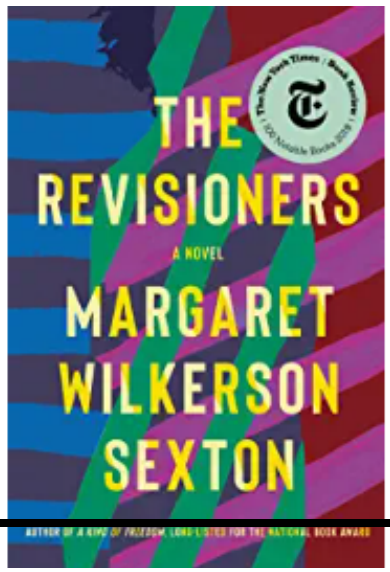
5 books to read if you enjoyed 'Writers & Lovers' by Lily King

The New York Times bestselling author shares her recommendations.

March 30, 2020, 1:12 PM EDT / Source: TODAY

By Stephanie Larratt

Jenna Bush Hager's Read With Jenna book club pick for March, "Writers & Lovers" by Lily King, is the story of a young woman named Casey Peabody. Single and struggling to make it as a writer, Casey finds herself reevaluating her priorities in both her career and her love life after the unexpected death of her mother. As Casey stares down the abyss between youth and adulthood, she realizes what is really important to her in every aspect of her life.



If you loved this coming-of-age story, you'll love these recommendations from author Lily King. While they are all unique, each story has elements of Casey's struggle to find love, establish her career and build her dream life.

1. "The Revisioners" by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton

"The Revisioners" is a story that mixes time and place to show how history can have lasting effects in the present.

As a former slave, Josephine is proud to be the owner of a farm in 1924. When her white neighbor, Charlotte, seeks her friendship, Josephine's family is put at risk by Charlotte's affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan.

Nearly a century later, Josephine's descendant, Ava, moves in with her white grandmother after losing her job. Ava's lonely grandmother Martha agrees to pay Ava for companionship, but before long, Martha's behavior becomes threatening. Despite hundreds of years between them, Ava and Josephine's stories begin to converge.

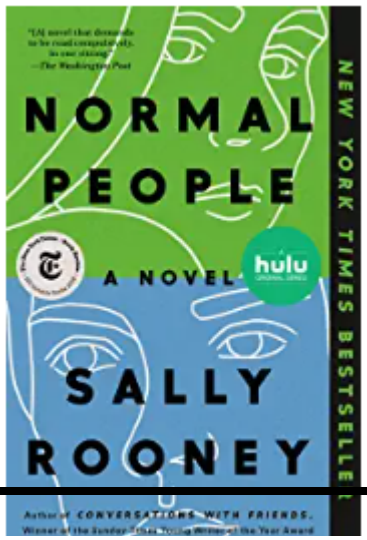
This novel is a powerful exploration of female relationships, family bonds and hope.

2. "Such a Fun Age" by Kiley Reid

Reese Witherspoon's book club pick for January, "Such a Fun Age," is a provocative novel that explores themes of race and privilege in modern-day American society.

Alix Chamberlain is a driven, well-off, white woman who recently moved from New York City to the suburbs of Pennsylvania. With a self-made business to run and a book in the works, Alix hires Emira Tucker, a 25-year-old black woman still figuring out what she wants to do with her life, to babysit her two children.

One night, Emira is confronted in the grocery store and accused of stealing Alix's 2-year-old daughter, Briar. The incident is filmed and makes all parties involved feel extremely uncomfortable. Alix wants to make things right, but Emira wants to forget about the entire mess. When it comes to light that someone from Alix's past was involved in the incident, both women find themselves on a path they could have never anticipated.



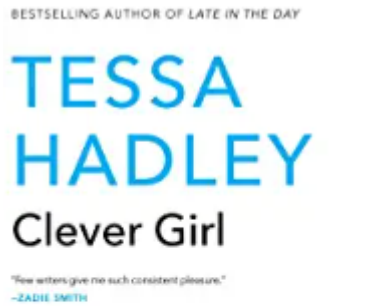
3. "Normal People" by Sally Rooney

Connell and Marianne have nearly nothing in common except for the small town they grew up in. Yet something life-changing happens when the two strike up an electrifying conversation for the first time.

After high school, both students head to Dublin to study at Trinity College. They are continually drawn back together at the university, despite existing in different social circles. Their inexplicable bond is tested as each of them veer off course. As things get tough, they discover how far they are willing to go for one another.

This romance novel beautifully explores the dynamics of young love, class and the power a single relationship can hold in one's life.

4. "Clever Girl" by Tessa Hadley



A story told through a series of episodes, "Clever Girl" is about the life of an English woman named Stella. The novel moves from the 1960s to today, as it explores family relationships, broken dreams and the beauty of ordinary life.

Hadley uses vivid language to bring mundane details to life. If you enjoyed the comingof-age nature of "Writers & Lovers," you won't be able to put down this novel.

THE TRANSIT OF VENUS
Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction
"A wonderfully mysterious book . . . Both plot and characters are many layered. Unforgettably rich"
—Anne Tyler, The New Republic
SHIRLEY HAZZARD

5. "The Transit of Venus" by Shirley Hazzard

"The Transit of Venus" follows the lives of two sisters, Caroline and Grace Bell, after they move from Australia to postwar England. The orphaned siblings' lives are defined by time periods and the places they live. Caroline, the bold and adventurous sibling, finds love in a passionate relationship while her more mild sister,

Grace, finds a seemingly happy marriage. However, over the course of several decades, both will experience love and loss that feels as predestined as the planets.

Hazzard's writing is thoughtful and transcendent in this powerful novel.

https://www.today.com/shop/5-books-read-if-you-loved-lily-king-s-writers-t176620

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING- PROVIDED BY THE PUBLISHER

A Room of One’s Own by Virginia Woolf

Days of Distraction by Alexandra Chang

Track Changes by Sayed Kashua
Girls Burn Brighter by Shobha Rao
My Name Is Lucy Barton by Elizabeth Strout
Dept of Speculation by Jenny Offilll
Woodcutters by Thomas Bernhard
Normal People by Sally Rooney
Leaving Atocha Station by Ben Lerner
Clever Girl by Tessa Hadley
Commonwealth by Ann Patchett
How Should a Person Be? by Sheila Heti
Autumn by Ali Smith

https://groveatlantic.com/book/writers-lovers/